



## **For Immediate Release**

**Date:** Wednesday, March 11, 2009

### **IIMPACT Detectives Break Up Valley Area Human Smuggling Organizations**

*Multiple investigations rescues victims & arrest suspects  
(Note: This news releases has three pages)*

Detectives from the Illegal Immigration Prevention & Apprehension Co-op Team began a major criminal investigation on Feb. 16, 2009 into human smuggling, kidnapping and extortion being conducted in the Valley. The investigation was concluded on Mar. 3, 2009 with the arrest of 11 suspects and the rescue of 30 victims.

On Feb. 16, IIMPACT were requested to conduct an investigation at 3536 West Osborn, Suite #8 in Phoenix, where Phoenix Police Officers had identified a business named "Espana Custom Cabinets." Undocumented aliens were believed to being held against their will with threats of violence to extort more money from the group. This investigation began when Phoenix PD received information from an anonymous citizen which led to a check welfare at the business. Officers found a total of 22 people inside, 16 undocumented aliens that were being held against their will, three employees of the business and three suspects.

During the investigation conducted at the West Osborn location, detectives obtained key information that expanded the investigation to an address located at 2230 North 48<sup>th</sup> Lane, in Phoenix, a single family residence. On Feb. 20, the IIMPACT detectives approached the house and numerous people fled on foot. There were six individuals that were identified as the suspects, who fled on foot from the residence. All six suspects were immediately captured.

Detectives obtained additional information from the investigation conducted at the 48<sup>th</sup> Lane location which led them conduct an investigation into two residences in the East Valley. On Mar. 3, detectives approached one of the residences and two individuals attempted to flee but were apprehended. The last two suspects were believed to be some of the vehicle drivers for the organization.

#### **Media Inquiries:**

Arizona Department of Public Safety – Media Relations  
Post Office 6638 - Mail Drop 3350 | Phoenix, AZ 85005-6638 | E-mail Contact: [pio@azdps.gov](mailto:pio@azdps.gov)  
| [www.azdps.gov](http://www.azdps.gov)



The excellent enforcement action implemented by the IIMPACT Detectives in this multi-faceted investigation, brought this human smuggling organization to an end.

The victims had paid an average of \$1,400 to \$1,800.00 to be brought into the United States, and then were held against their will at one of the locations listed above and scared into obtaining additional payment. While being held, they were intimidated through the fear of death with the use of firearms pointed at them, threatened with violence to call their relatives to obtain another \$2,000 to \$3,000 each for their release.

All the individuals listed as suspects were booked and charged with human smuggling, kidnapping, extortion and some had additional charges consisting of misconduct involving weapons, arrest warrants and other federal immigration violations.

### **IIMPACT Detectives Rescue 10 Victims, Serve Two Serve Warrants**

On Wednesday, March 4, 2009, Detectives from the Illegal Immigration Prevention & Apprehension Co-op Team (IIMPACT) conducted an investigation into two Phoenix area locations that were identified as possible drop house locations where undocumented aliens were believed to being forcible held against their will. The Phoenix locations were identified as 8232 West Indianola Avenue and 4224 North 49<sup>th</sup> Drive.

At around 2:00 PM, Security personnel from the Home Depot store located at 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Camelback, contacted the Phoenix Police Department and advised they were with an individual who claimed to have been held against his will. The victim stated had been forcible held against his will at two different locations in the Phoenix area and was in the process of being transported in a passenger vehicle when he jumped out of the vehicle when it came to a stop at the intersection of 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Camelback. He then ran into the Home Depot store located on the southwest corner of that intersection where security personnel came in contact with him.

Phoenix PD responded and interviewed the individual. From the initial information obtained it was determined the individual was an undocumented alien and based on his information also a victim of kidnapping, physical violence and extortion. As a result of the information received from the interview of the victim, Phoenix PD were able to

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identify the location of the two residences and conducted a check welfare at each address.

The officers did not find any individuals at the residence on 49<sup>th</sup> Drive. Officers did find several people in the residence located on West Indianola. A total of 15 people were in the residence, six were identified as suspects (coyotes) and nine were identified as undocumented aliens that were being held against their will. In addition to the initial victim found at Home Depot that makes for a total of 10 undocumented aliens that were held at the Indianola residence. Phoenix PD then notified IIMPACT to conduct an investigation.

IIMPACT detectives conducted an investigation which yielded the following information. The group is comprised of Mexican Nationals. The initial amount paid for being brought into the United States was \$1,400.00 each. The suspects were demanding an additional \$2,000 for each to be released. The suspects used threats of violence, fear and physical harm, pointed two types of firearms at the victims while they contacted their relatives on the phone to obtain the additional money being demanded through extortion.

The suspects were booked into the Fourth Avenue Jail and each will be charged with human smuggling, kidnapping, extortion and assault. The undocumented aliens were turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement for processing and disposition.

# End #

*IIMPACT is composed of the Phoenix Police Department (PPD), U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Arizona Fraudulent Identification Task Force (AFIT) and the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS). IIMPACT was formed over a year ago and is a project managed by the Gang Immigration and Intelligence Team Enforcement Mission (GIITEM), a multi-agency task force administered by the Arizona Department of Public Safety. IIMPACT was designed to investigate crimes involving extreme violence; such as kidnap, rape, homicide, assault, extortion, home invasions, hi-jacking and the overall disregard for human life associated with the serious problems of human smuggling. The overall goal of IIMPACT is to make Arizona communities safer by deterring, disrupting and dismantling the human smuggling criminal organizations through the apprehension and prosecution of those involved.*

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